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LOCAL ENTOMOLOGICAL NOTES.

Members of the New York Entomological Society and all others are solicited to contribute to this column, their rare captures, local lists and other items of interest relating to the insect fauna of New York city and vicinity.

INSECTS AT WATCHOGUE AND BEULAH LAND, STATEN ISLAND, N. Y.

By WILLIAM T. DAVIS.

Charles Lamb is said to have preferred the city because that marked changed of the seasons which he witnessed in the country was nearly absent from the paved streets. But to most people this gradual march of the year is pleasant—the ushering in of spring, the hospitable days of summer that seem to invite you to sleep out of doors, the cool invigorating autumn and the still more brisk season of winter, pass like changing scenery before a car window. In the same way the varied prospect offered by even so small a piece of mother earth as Staten Island—the change from rocky hills to barren sandy tracts and salt meadows—is ever inviting. It is pleasant to make numerous comparisons as the season advances, to walk from the hills over to the sandy ground, or to the meadows, for in nature comparisons are not odious. One of the most interesting of these sandy tracts lies about Old Place meadow, in the midst of which is the tortuous Old Place creek, an arm of the Sound. The sandy point that projects northward into the meadow is called Beulah by the natives in a spirit of irony, but to a naturalist it is truly Beulah Land and most interesting.

The standing or upright Clematis (*Clematis ochroleuca*) grows at Beulah, as does the Lupine, the Hoary Pea and many small oaks (*Quercus humilis*), while nearby are Moccasin flowers (*Cypripedium acaule*) and the Marsh Marigolds of early spring. The flower-bed arrangement of plants—the little clumps of certain kinds that grow together to the almost exclusion of the neighboring vegetation—is interesting and at Watchogue and Beulah Land many parcels of sandy ground are given up to colonies of Birds-foot Violets, and other equally pleasing settlers.

In early spring, when the snow still lingers in sheltered places, the beautiful deep orange, brown and black moth, *Brephos infans*, makes its appearance on the borders of Old Place meadow. It is not seen every spring, though of course it must be present, but every few years, on some sunny day, it appears in numbers. It alights in the open

wood paths and, spreading its wings, displays its beautiful colors, or flying up into some tree, particularly a red maple, crawls about the terminal branches. There are few signs of spring when this moth arrives, the wood paths are brown, and the contrast of its bright colors with the dead leaves is one of the memorable sights of the season.

A little later *Thecla augusta* makes its appearance in considerable numbers, seeking the sheltered, sunny places, and often alighting on the sweet-ferns, the huckleberry bushes and the pines. It is said that the food-plant of this Indian colored butterfly is unknown, and it is to be regretted that Staten Islanders have not been more industrious in gaining this point of information, for probably nowhere in the vicinity of New York can it be so easily obtained.

On the 8th of May, 1881, while in company with Mr. Leng, six or seven *Thecla niphon* and a single *Thecla damon* (*smilacis*) were collected at Watchogue. Perhaps these two butterflies have appeared since, but every spring the sandy stretch of road where they occurred on that May day has been visited without seeing them again. Wood fires are altogether too frequent, and possibly the colony was thus destroyed, as have been many rare plants. The growing fraternity of tramping naturalists should utter upon every opportunity their protest against burning the woods. Many ignorant boys set fire to the dry leaves for "the fun," as they say, of seeing them burn, and thus much that is interesting and beautiful in the country is permanently destroyed.

Papilio ajax was seen on June 30th, 1889, near Old Place creek, but it was in its customary haste. *Nisoniades brizo* is one of the most common butterflies of the vicinity, and *Euptoieta claudia* one of the rarest.

Early in April *Cicindela modesta* commences to fly on the sand dunes. This beetle is, as a rule, quite local, confining itself to certain dunes, but stragglers are to be met with elsewhere. During the summer a few are seen, and in September and October they make their second general appearance.

Cicindela generosa is also quite plentiful on certain sandy stretches. It has been taken in company with *C. vulgaris* as early as the 9th of April and as late as the middle of October. *Cicindela repanda* also puts in appearance during the first days of April, coming earlier than *hirticollis* by over a month. *Omophron americanum* may be washed from the banks of Old Place brook, and the funny little protective-colored *Elaphrus ruscarius* has been found running in the muddy ditches by the side of the road.

Watchogue and Beulah Land have been industriously explored in quest of Orthoptera, and none collected have proved more interesting than the small wonderful jumping cricket, *Tridactylus terminalis*. These little creatures occur along Old Place brook and in the damp ditches by the road side, from May to September. Their power of leaping is so remarkable that they seem to disappear quite mysteriously and one wonders which way they have gone. It is seldom that their departure can be accurately followed by the eye.

Among tree-crickets, *Ecanthus*, *niveus*, *angustipennis*, *nigricornis* and *latipennis* have been found, the latter being the most local of the four. The best way to collect tree-crickets is to become acquainted with their notes, after which simply walking through the woods and over grown pastures, especially about the hour of sunset, will disclose what kinds are to be found in the district. They are energetic though faint songsters, and even the cold summer storms that seem so discouraging cannot hush their tingling lays.

Another interesting Cricket is *Phylloscirtus pulchellus*. It is not a good jumper, but has a comely shiny coat of mail that makes it ever a pleasing insect. It runs about the tree branches, especially those of the sweet gum, and in the fall, when it is chilly, it will often be found hidden in a curled leaf, from whence issues its continuous rolling song.

Four kinds of cone-headed Katydids reside about Old Place creek ; three of them, *ensiger*, *dissimilis* and *robustus*, often occupying the dry dunes. When they live in such situations they are more often protectively sand colored than their fellows which reside in the green pastures. The fourth species, *Conocephalus exiliscanorus*, lives in the tall meadow grass along the creek itself, and sings its lazy slow song from July until the cold nights of autumn. This is also a common insect on the Newark meadows.

Atlanticus pachymerus is a loud singing Katydid that resides in the tussocks of grass in the moist meadows near Watchogue. It has no wings, but is a fairly good jumper and makes an amusing pet. I kept one during the summer of 1892, from his youth to old age. At first he was an energetic singer, but he finally became decrepid, and it was hard for him to get about. No doubt in his native pasture he would long before have been killed by some powerful enemy.

The large harvest fly, *Cicada marginata*, has only been taken on the Island at Watchogue and vicinity. On the 19th of July, 1892, Mr. Beutenmüller and I found one on a post oak growing on a sand dune,

and later in the summer a pupa case was discovered on a black-jack oak, also on sandy ground.

In 1894 the distribution of the 17-year Cicadas about Old Place meadow was particularly interesting. They were quite rare on the most sandy districts along its southern edge, though abundant in the woods on its eastern margin. It was in this last mentioned place where pupæ cones were found on the 8th of April under some boards that did not lie sufficiently close to the ground to prevent their construction. Later these pupæ cones were discovered in considerable numbers along Willow Brook, a mile or two away. They were found in the woods under stones, logs and the chips about the stumps of trees cut down in the winter. Many more were without protection of this kind, the cones rising among the dead leaves, occasionally to the height of three inches.

There has been much written about the periodical Cicada, but it is certainly one of the most interesting of insects, and attracts the attention of all thoughtful persons. In June days in locust year its song sounds like the hum of an ever-busy factory. There is a continuous roar in the trees and the bird notes form but an unimportant part in the melody of nature. If you cease listening to Cicadas, then you may hear the bird's songs, for the singing of the insects is so constant that you may easily forget that it exists. Man writes poems on love, but the male Cicada utters his love song with a greater vim. He is no laggard in love and would please Sir Walter Scott mightily. He lifts his body and calls Phar-r-roah, a song of but a few moments duration, and quickly flies away, for why should he tarry when Chloe comes not? Thus he flies on the warm days from tree to tree, and mayhap at last meets his red-eyed spouse.

Thecla acadica was taken June 29th at Greenwood Lake, New Jersey, by Mr. Wm. Sachs. As far as we are aware this is the first record of the occurrence of the species in this vicinity. *Catocala coccinata* was also taken at the same place, and also *Phyciodes nycteis*, which appeared in abundance.

Two specimens of *Dichelonycha fuscula* were taken at Valley Stream, Long Island, in July.

WM. B.